2020 CENSUS PROGRAM MEMORANDUM SERIES: 2021.02

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MEMORANDUM FOR: The Record

From: Albert E. Fontenot, Jr. (signed January 12, 2021)
Associate Director, Decennial Census Programs

Subject: Updates to the Census Questionnaire Assistance Operation Scope

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This memorandum documents the final updates to the Census Questionnaire Assistance (CQA) operation program scope since the release of Version 2.0, Census Questionnaire Assistance 2020 Census Detailed Operational Plan. It also outlines the contingency activities implemented to combat the impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. The memo is divided into the following four sections:

- Scope changes since Version 2.0 was issued.
- Final CQA operation "Activity Tree" – An outline structure reflecting the decomposition of major operational activities in the operation.
- Background – COVID-19 pandemic response.
- Critical contingency actions the CQA operation implemented to address the pandemic.

The Business Process Models for CQA have also been updated. The updated document is also posted to the 2020 Census Memo Series and linked to this memo.
2020 Census Operational Plan and Detailed Operational Plans

Scope changes since Version 2.0 was issued:

- DELETE – Nonresponse Followup (NRFU) Reinterview no longer supported by the CQA operation (Section 3.3.2 Perform NRFU Reinterviews). This functionality was eliminated following the 2018 End-to-End Census Test because of a lower than expected case completion rate.
- DELETE – Webchat no longer supported as a formal communication channel (Section 3.4 Webchat Support). Census managers deemed this functionality not essential for the 2020 Census when the cost of the development outweighed the projected benefit. Additionally, there were other options available for the public to communicate with the Census Bureau.
- DELETE – Questionnaire Status, which would allow a caller to see if their questionnaire had been formally received by the Census Bureau, no longer supported by the CQA operation. (Several references, including Section 2 Operational Overview and Appendix E and F). In order to provide the functionality, interfaces with other Census Bureau systems that were not in the original scope would have been required. Senior management decided in 2018 to eliminate questionnaire status from the 2020 Census. Instead, the CQA operation used Interactive Voice Response (IVR) messaging to inform callers to disregard mailed materials if they had already responded.
- DELETE – Information about 2020 Census jobs was eliminated from CQA scope in 2018 and the functions were assigned to the Field Infrastructure operation (Appendix E).
- ADD – Telephone assistance and support for group quarters (GQ) administrators, who may call the CQA operation for help in completing GQ questionnaires during the GQ enumeration operation. (New requirement – Section 3.2 Inbound Calling Operations).
- ADD – COVID-19 Response Functionality for a Work-at-Home CQA solution implemented to improve the customer experience during staffing shortages and high call volumes caused by the pandemic (New requirement – Section 3.2 Inbound Calling Operations). This was implemented on all CQA phone lines (all languages) and allowed callers to request a callback if there was not a live census representative available to answer. CQA customer service representatives (CSRs), using government furnished equipment at home, would call back respondents and provide assistance or collect an enumeration. To assist the CQA CSRs with making these call backs on the English and Spanish language lines, representatives from the Mobile Questionnaire Assistance (MQA) program were trained and equipped to make calls April through June 2020.

Final CQA operation's Activity Tree (Appendix C, page 63):

The following reflects the final decomposition of the major operational activities that make up the CQA operation.

Operation	Numbered Activity Tree
17. Census Questionnaire Assistance Center Operation (CQA) FINAL Business Process Model Version: 6.0	**17-1 CQA Development and Preparation** 　　17-1.1 Develop and Prepare 　　　　17-1.1.1 Conduct Hiring and Training **17-2 Inbound Calling Operations** 　　17-2.1 Receive English, Spanish, PR English, and PR Spanish Inbound Phone Calls 　　　　17-2.1.1 Provide IVR Assistance 　　　　17-2.1.2 Provide Live Agent Assistance 　　17-2.2 Receive Non-English and Non-Spanish Inbound Phone Calls 　　　　17-2.2.1 Provide Live Agent Assistance 　　17-2.3 Provide Callback for English, Spanish, or Non-English Non-Spanish Speakers 　　17-2.4 Receive Group Quarter Phone Calls **17-3 Outbound Calling Operations** 　　17-3.1 Perform Coverage Improvement **17-4 Oversight, Monitoring, and Reporting** 　　17-4.1 Collect, Send, and Report on CQA Phone Call Data **17-5 CQA Quality Assurance** 　　17-5.1 Perform Quality Assurance **17-6 CQA Operation Closeout** 　　17-6.1 Perform CQA Closeout

The updated Activity Tree represents the following changes:

1. Added activities associated with hiring and training of the CQA workforce.
2. Split the Inbound Calling workflows into two paths: (1) Inbound English and Spanish language calls and (2) Inbound Non-English and Non-Spanish language calls. This change was made because Non-English and Non-Spanish calls went directly to the appropriate language-speaking CQA CSRs, bypassing the automated Interactive Voice Response (IVR) self-service.
3. Added activities associated with telephone assistance and support for GQ administrators.
4. Added activities associated with allowing callers to request a call back.

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Background – **COVID-19 pandemic response:**

As the 2020 Census was beginning, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic were escalating, and more federal, state, and local government guidelines and restrictions were issued pertaining to steps to contain the spread of the virus. On March 18, 2020, Census Bureau management paused field operations for two weeks. (See new release: https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2020/operational-update.html). On March 28, 2020, Census Bureau managers paused field operations for an additional two weeks. However, the self-response component of the 2020 Census continued with advertising and promoting the importance of responding by internet or by telephone. With the expectation to continue telephone operations in support of the 2020 Census, it meant the need for a rapid response to the pandemic environment to ensure that CQA employee health and safety were the priority, followed by optimizing operational performance, and making necessary adjustments to the potential new reasons respondents might be calling.

Critical steps the CQA operation implemented to address the pandemic:

- March 2020: All CQA contact centers remained open. The CQA operation implemented a contingency staffing plan to accommodate social distancing guidelines and updated operating procedures to outline COVID-19 disease control policies, such as required personal protective equipment use. The Census Bureau also formally designated the CQA program's mission and the employees required to support the operation "Mission Essential" to the 2020 Census. A letter was written and signed by the Census Bureau's Director outlining this designation and was carried by CQA employees to present to law enforcement officials if confronted in areas with travel restrictions.

- March/April 2020: The CQA telephone system's front-end automated messages were adjusted and call flows revised to improve the customer experience during the pandemic.

- March 9, 2020: The CQA program activated functionality to provide callers an option to continue to wait on hold or receive a returned call without losing their place "in the queue." This function was turned on and off, as needed, based on call volumes and staffing levels.

- March 16, 2020: CQA facilities procured site decontamination services. The program also implemented procedures to address the need to shut down a site, temporarily, for a full cleaning and decontamination effort upon identification of a positive pandemic case.

- March 22, 2020: To assist with reducing absenteeism, the operation began providing weekly and/or daily transportation stipends to eligible call center staff required to be in the office, to assist with securing these employees safe transportation to and from work.

- March 23, 2020: The CQA operation began formal dashboard monitoring of pandemic statistics, shelter-in-place orders, and other news that impacted CQA contact centers.

- March 27, 2020: CQA facilities began immediate preparations and procurement of proper COVID-19 procedures, training, signage, and personal protection equipment, such as hand sanitizers and face coverings.

- April 13, 2020: The CQA operation implemented new functionality for all inbound phone lines, allowing callers to request a callback. This was implemented to relieve high call volumes. These callback requests were then assigned to an available CQA CSR or MQA representative working from home to return the call and provide assistance or collect an enumeration. The operation secured government furnished equipment from the Decennial Device as a Service program to support the effort.

- May 5, 2020: The CQA operation implemented a Clear-to-Work (health assessment) application requiring call center employees to self-report their health condition, based on a series of questions, prior to arriving at work. If an employee responded to any question with a YES, they were not cleared to work, and notifications were sent to onsite call center management staff.

- June 23, 2020: The CQA operation implemented conducting ongoing daily temperature and wellness checks on contact center employees.

The 2020 Census Memorandum Series

The 2020 Census Memorandum Series documents significant decisions, actions, and accomplishments of the 2020 Census Program for the purpose of informing stakeholders, coordinating interdivisional efforts, and documenting important historical changes.

A memorandum generally will be added to this series for any decision or documentation that meets the following criteria:

1. A major program-level decision that will affect the overall design or have significant effect on 2020 Census operations or systems.

2. A major policy decision or change that will affect the overall design or significantly impact 2020 Census operations or systems.

3. A report that documents the research and testing for 2020 Census operations or systems.

Visit www.census.gov/2020census to access the Memorandum Series, the 2020 Census Operational Plan, and other information about preparations for the 2020 Census.